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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of two educational films, "Skipper Learns a Lesson" and "The Toymaker," to shape children's perception of minority groups. Before and after viewing the films, 153 grade-school-aged children were asked to look at coloring book style portraits of Caucasian and minority children and to rate them according to 12 personal attributes. Results showed that prejudiced responses were significantly reduced after viewing. (EMH)

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Audio-Visual Media as an Instructional Technique for Reducing Prejudice in Young Children

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The existence of biased preconceptions unfavorable toward ethnic minorities is a problem which has plagued our society for many generations. Researchers have obtained results indicating that children acquire ethnic attitudes and preferences which predetermine their relationships with minorities as early as age three or four (Weiss, 1961; Porter, 1971; Lasker, 1929; Clark & Clark, 1939; Goodman, 1964). Both researchers and educators have spent enormous quantities of time and money attempting to develop instructional approaches, programs and/or materials which are capable of reducing the negative attitudes which are so prevalent among the young. These individuals have generally employed one or more of the following three modes in their attempts to reduce prejudice: 1) the use of an enriched curriculum and materials, 2) an innovative teaching method or, 3) personal contact with members of minority races. Some of the specific approaches which have either been utilized, evaluated or suggested are: the use of multi-ethnic readers (Litcher & Johnson, 1969); multi-ethnic social studies material (Yawkey & Blackwell, 1974); readings on the causes and manifestations of prejudice (Katz, 1957); studies of African geography and culture (Williams, 1961); contact on an informal, personal level with minority group members (Coleman, 1967; Webster, 1961; Axline, 1948); and showing

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of pictures of mixed racial groups of children (Litcher, Johnson & Ryan, 1973). More complex programs have been developed which combine either the reading of biographies of famous Black Americans with stories depicting Blacks in a positive manner plus the use of multi-ethnic readers, filmstrips and movies (Singh & Anna, 1974), or the use of direct experiences with minority children through a tutorial program with an enriched curriculum combining studies of Africa, famous Black personalities and the problems of Blacks (Leslie, Leslie & Penfield, 1972). However, much of the effort has been to no avail, with those who have completed the experimental programs often not differing in ethnocentricism from those not exposed to the program.

Among the various educational approaches to reducing prejudice which have been either tested or suggested, surprisingly little attention has been focused upon the utility of audio-visual media as a technique for altering these negative attitudes. Yet, numerous researchers have considered television and film to be effective instruments of learning in young children (Schramm, Lyle & Parker, 1961; Himmelweit, Oppenheimer & Vince, 1958; Klapper, 1970; Charters, 1933), because they fulfill a number of necessary conditions for effective learning. First, audio-visual media affect two senses at once, hence many argue that this allows the child to absorb more of the material than if it were merely read or heard (Himmelweit et al., 1958). Secondly, children tend to enjoy TV and movies and so are favorably predisposed to what is presented. Schramm et al. (1961) argue that television and film are very effective at conveying information to children because the medium makes everything appear real to the child. They contend that in the early years of childhood there is a shadowy border between the fantasy world and the real world and that the events of the picture tube often seem exceptionally life-like to a young child.

Schramm et al. further suggest that films exercise a peculiarly deep emotional possession of children because of their use of concrete settings and attractive scenes which are considered to be emotionally stimulating for the child. They conclude that the combination of these factors produces a condition favorable to certain types of learning due to the child's intense concentration and emersion in the medium and his/her unquestioning acceptance of the information being conveyed.

The ability of television and film to alter children's behavior has long been supported by the numerous studies correlating aggressive behavior with the viewing of programs displaying violence (Steuer, Applefield & Smith, 1971; Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963; Lovaas, 1961; Leifer & Roberts, 1972). Recent research has indicated that prosocial behavior can also be communicated through television. Friedrich and Stein (1973) observed that television viewing of socially valued behavior results in children's greater self-control by persisting in tasks, obeying rules and tolerating delays. Exposure to prosocial programs, such as Sesame Street and Misterogers Neighborhood has been found to increase desirable traits such as sharing, cooperation and self-control (Friedrich & Stein, 1975; Stein & Bryan, 1972; Stein & Friedrich, 1972).

There is much evidence to suggest that children's behavior can be modified by television, but much less research is available on the effects of television upon children's attitudes. As early as 1933 Peterson and Thurstone observed that after viewing popular Hollywood-made films, children changed their attitudes making them more consistent with the values presented in the films. Their subjects developed positive attitudes toward Germans and Chinese and negative attitudes toward war. However, for the nearly forty years since the completion of Peterson and Thurstone's work little attention was paid to the utility of audio-visual media as a means

of producing attitude change.

Recent national studies of children who have watched Sesame Street for two years have indicated that viewers of the show have more positive attitudes toward school and members of various races than non-viewers (Bogatz & Ball, 1971). Furthermore, adolescents who watched the CBS National Citizenship Test were observed to have changed their attitudes more in the direction advocated by the program than did non-viewers (Alper & Leidy, 1970) The research described in this paper was designed to continue this line of investigation by evaluating the utility of audio-visual media as an instructional technique for altering ethnic attitudes in young children.

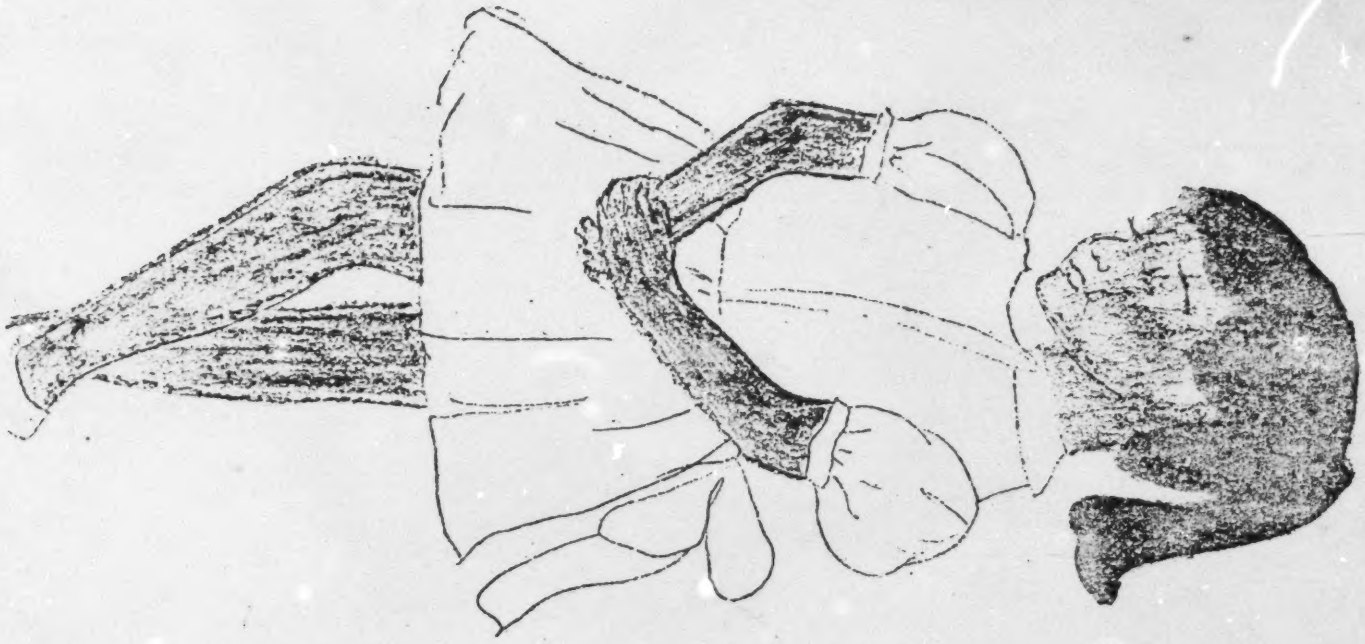
METHOD

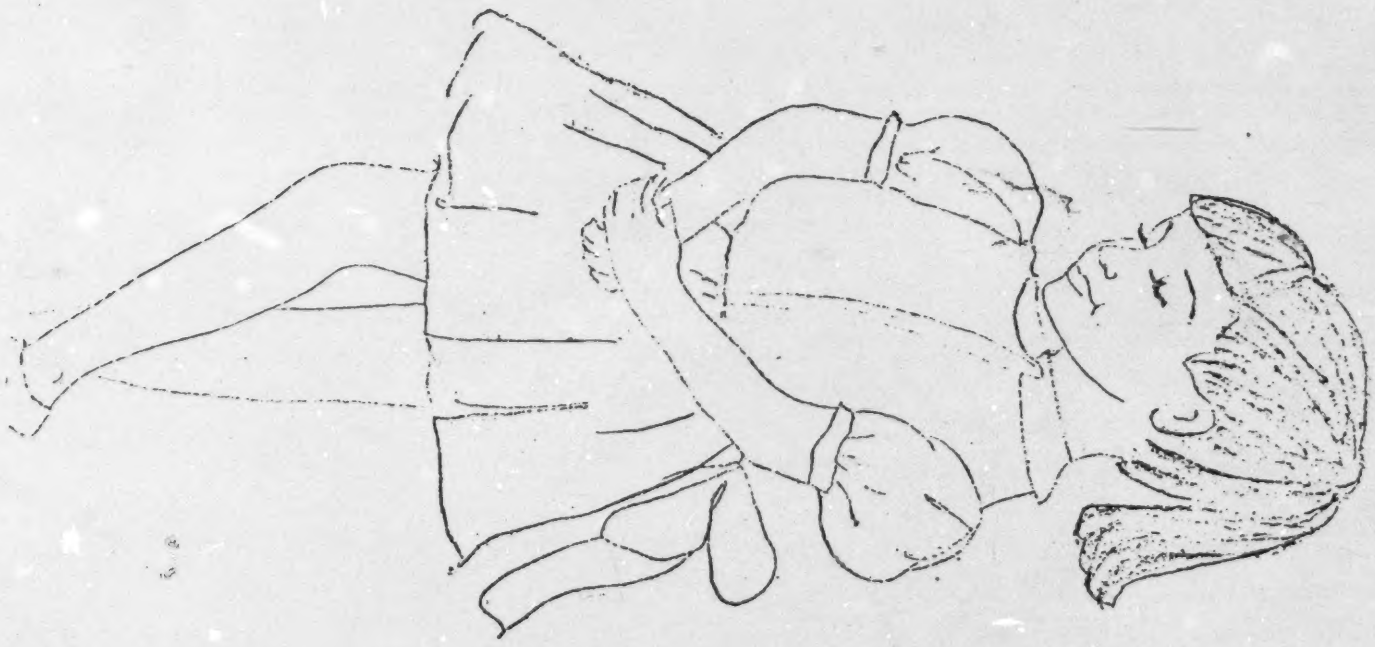
Subjects

One hundred and fifty-three children between the ages of five and nine served as subjects for the study. Their mean age was 7.3 and a total of 22.9 percent of the subjects represented members of an ethnic minority group; i.e., 12.7 percent Black, 7.5 percent Oriental, 2.7 Mexican-American. The sample included 80 girls and 73 boys. All subjects were students at a public elementary school located in an upper-middle class residential area of Los Angeles.

Apparatus

Ethnic attitudes were measured through the use of a 12 item scale similar to the picture-story technique used by Renninger and Williams (1966) and Williams and Roberson (1967). For each item the subjects were shown two full-length crayon drawings on a 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper, of children identical except for skin and hair color. One drawing was of a Caucasian child and the other was of either a Black, Mexican-American or Oriental child (see drawing). The Black figure was colored with medium-brown skin and black





Sample Afro-American Unit of the American Adult Readings

hair, the Mexican-American figure with light-brown skin and black hair, the Oriental figure with yellowish-tan skin and black hair and the Caucasian figure with pinkish-tan skin and either blond or brown hair. All figures were drawn with a minimum of facial characteristics and were posed either sitting, standing or walking. The use of identical drawings except for skin and hair color controls for such things as liking or disliking one of the figures because of clothing, facial characteristics and overall appearance.

There were six sets of pictures, two sets for each ethnic minority being studied, which were administered twice during the testing of each subject. The pictures were shown in the same order in the first six questions as in the second six, and it was randomly determined which question would be paired with which pair of drawings.

The subjects were introduced to the crayon drawings by being told that the Caucasian figure was an American and the other was either an Afro-American, Mexican-American or Oriental-American. The drawings were introduced in this manner to make apparent to the subjects the ethnic differences between the figures while also noting the national similiarities, since all were referred to as "Americans."

Each presentation of a pair of drawings was accompanied by a story read to the subjects which was designed to assess the subjects' attitudes toward the minority figure (i.e., "Here are two boys, one is Mexican-American and the other is American. Their teacher says one of these little boys tries very hard at everything he does. Who is it?") A total of 12 different two to three line stories composed the ethnic attitude scale employed in the study. The scale was made up of three distinct sets of four items which were designed to assess ethnic attitudes toward Blacks, Mexican-Americans and Orientals, respectively. The stories dealt with attitudes

regarding certain personal traits believed to be representative of common stereotypic conceptions of minority group members (e.g., ambition, attractiveness, responsibility and desirability). One question was designed for each of the ethnic groups to test attitudes regarding these four respective traits (see Table 1). The questions were worded so half of the items were positively stated and the other half were negatively stated.

After hearing each story and viewing the drawings, the subjects were requested to choose between the two figures. The order in which the drawings were presented to the subjects was randomized, with the minority figure being presented first in half of the stories and the Anglo figure first in the remaining stories; thereby reducing the problem of the subject responding on the basis of the picture-order rather than the ethnicity of the individual in the picture and the story.

Procedure

Experimenters were four upper-division and graduate students who were randomly assigned to the subjects. All were females, three Caucasians and one Black. Each experimenter was introduced to the subjects by their regular classroom teacher as a student from UCLA who was going to do some testing to determine how people make friends. Each subject was individually removed from the classroom and brought to the school auditorium where all testing was undertaken. The subjects were then randomly assigned to one of three groups: Group 1, the control group in which subjects were not exposed to a film; Group 2, an experimental group in which the subjects were exposed to one film; Group 3, another experimental group where the subjects were shown two films. The films used in the study, Skipper Learns a Lesson (seen by both Group 2 and 3) and The Toymaker (seen only by Group 3) were obtained from the Anti-Defamation League and were designed for young children between the ages of five and ten.

Table 1. Summary of Ethnic Attitude Scale

Question Number and Type[1]	Picture Order First - Second	Key Question (which one/which one would you...?)
1 (Am)	Caucasian - Oriental	...is the hardest worker
2 (Att)	Caucasian - Mexican-American	...is ugly and dirty
3 (Des)	Black - Caucasian	...like to play with
4 (Resp)	Oriental - Caucasian	...steals and cheats
5 (Am)	Mexican-American - Caucasian	...tries very hard at everything
6 (Att)	Caucasian - Black	...is handsome
7 (Des)	Caucasian - Oriental	...not want on your team
8 (Resp)	Caucasian - Mexican-American	...is fair and honest
9 (Am)	Black - Caucasian	...is lazy
10 (Att)	Oriental - Caucasian	...looks nice
11 (Des)	Mexican-American - Caucasian	...not want for a friend
12 (Resp)	Caucasian - Black	...won the "Good Citizen Award"

[1]Picture type: Am = Ambition item; Att= Attractiveness items, Des = Desirability item; Resp- Responsibility item

Skipper Learns a Lesson is a ten minute black and white film produced by Encyclopedia Britannica Films. It centers around a young girl and her dog who learn that differences in outward appearance are not important when choosing friends. The Toymaker is a 15 minute film in color produced by Contemporary Films. It is about two little puppets who are friends until they discover that they have superficial differences. Soon after an argument and fight, the puppets discover that they are in the hands of "The Toymaker" who informs them that he gave them different markings simply to tell them apart and to make them unique.

Both films dealt with rejection of others because of appearance; and the common theme was that appearance or color should not be considered important in relating to others. However, The Toymaker was a more abstract and esoteric film than Skipper Learns a Lesson, and it was for this reason that Skipper was chosen as the film to be seen by subjects in both Group 2 and 3 and Toymaker to be seen only by subjects in Group 3.

Each experimenter followed a carefully prepared script which began by asking the subject his/her full name and age and chatting with the child for a few moments describing what the study was about and allowing the child to become accustomed to the situation. The experimenter was seated next to the child and turned to face him/her when collecting data. The experimenter held the drawings in a vertical position midway between herself and the child. The mimeographed form on which the subjects' responses were recorded was kept behind the drawings in such a manner that the child could not observe the experimenter's actions. The subjects in Group 1 were tested immediately upon entry to the testing area, and those in Group 2 and 3 were tested after viewing the appropriate number of films.

The responses made by the subjects were rated by the experimenters on a five-point scale. A "1" was assigned when the subject showed no

obvious sign of frustration, confusion or hesitation in choosing the Caucasian figure for a positively worded item or the minority figure for a negatively worded item. A "2" was assigned when the child showed an obvious sign of frustration or hesitation in making the same response as that given a score of "1." A score of "3" was given when the subject was unable to choose between the two pictures or when they changed their response. A "4" was assigned when the child hesitated, showed frustration or confusion before choosing the minority figure for a positively worded item or the Caucasian for a negatively worded item. A score of "5" was given when the subject showed no signs of frustration, confusion of hesitation in making the same response as that assigned a score of "4."

The experimenters used in the study were trained and spot-checked by the research investigator to ensure that the scoring among them was consistent. They were informed they were only to rate a response as a 2, 3 or 4 when the child's difficulty was conspicous. A reliability check of the experimenters coding was made with two coders randomly assigned to ten percent of the total sample. The intercoder reliability was found to be 92 percent.

RESULTS

The findings suggest that the use of audio-visual media was effective in reducing prejudiced responses among the subjects in Group 2 and Group 3 versus those in Group 1 ($F = 35.11$, $df = 2, 150$, $p < .01$). However, there was not a significant difference in the responses of Group 2 versus Group 3 (see Table 2), thus indicating that two films were not significantly more capable of altering overall ethnic attitudes than was a single film.

The responses were divided into separate ethnic attitude scores for the three racial groups in order to (see Table 2) allow identification of any particular ethnic group for which the experimental treatment was not

effective in decreasing negative attitudes. The data revealed that the differences in attitudes between the film and non-film groups for each of the three racial groups were significant at the .01 level.

Group 2 versus Gruop 3 scores were again analyzed to determine whether two films were more effective than one for any of the three ethnic groups. The only racial group for which two films had a significantly greater impact than one film was for attitudes toward Blacks ($t = 2.20$, $p < .05$).

Table 2. Mean Ethnic Attitude Score by Test Group

	Test Groups			
Ethnic Group	No Film (N = 59)	One-Film (N = 45)	Two-Films (N = 49)	F
All minorities	27.75	41.53	43.24	35.11*
Black	9.10	13.20	15.04	29.51*
Mexican-American	8.32	13.31	13.63	24.54*
Oriental	10.31	15.02	14.55	18.83*

*Significance at the .01 level, df - 2, 150.

Finally, the data were examined to determine whether there was a significant difference in the effectiveness of the treatment due to certain demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, ethnicity of subjects, tester, ethnicity of tester). The data suggested that these demographic variables had no significant effect upon the utility of the films for altering ethnic attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that audio-visual media are

valuable in influencing certain attitudes which our schools are more frequently being expected to mold, but which teachers often feel ill-at-ease and incapable when attempting to influence. Admittedly, the results from this study are limited in generalizability because of the single school sampling, the particular films used and the time-limited, verbal bases of the responses. However, many researchers have shown that after exposure to audio-visual media is terminated, the attitudes which have been changed are likely to persist over a substantial time period (Klapper, 1960; Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield, 1949). Peterson and Thurstone (1933) observed that the positive attitude change toward Germans and Chinese produced from exposure to Hollywood-made films lasted for as long as eighteen months. Alper and Leidy (1970) also noted that the attitude change fostered in the adolescent viewers of the CBS National Citizenship Test lasted a minimum of six months. Therefore, the results obtained by this study are very encouraging and suggest that more attention should be paid to this form of instruction. In addition, the data illustrate that young children are capable of learning an extremely important concept from this medium within a short period of time (Group 2 was exposed to ten minutes of film and Group 3 to 25 minutes), and that increasing a child's amount of exposure to a particular idea does not necessarily increase the child's learning. However, the inability of the second film to significantly reduce ethnocentricism below the level produced by the first film may have been a result of the second film's abstract presentation which may not have been thoroughly comprehended by the young subjects.

Before the value of films for teaching attitudes can be fully realized, a serious problem resulting from the lack of acceptable films has to be overcome. It might be of great benefit for instructional developers to transfer some of their knowledge, energy and resources to the designing

of instructional film which will be of value in areas where the average classroom teacher may feel uncomfortable or inadequate. Once the necessary materials are available and educators begin to utilize them in their classrooms, the findings of this study indicate they should be pleased with the results.

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